

CHAPTER XXII

Staggering amid the crush, Pierre looked about him.

“Count Peter Kirílovich! How did you get here?” said a voice.

Pierre looked round. Borís Drubetskóy, brushing his knees with his hand (he had probably soiled them when he, too, had knelt before the icon), came up to him smiling. Borís was elegantly dressed, with a slightly martial touch appropriate to a campaign. He wore a long coat and like Kutúzov had a whip slung across his shoulder.

Meanwhile Kutúzov had reached the village and seated himself in the shade of the nearest house, on a bench which one Cossack had run to fetch and another had hastily covered with a rug. An immense and brilliant suite surrounded him.

The icon was carried further, accompanied by the throng. Pierre stopped some thirty paces from Kutúzov, talking to Borís.

He explained his wish to be present at the battle and to see the position.

“This is what you must do,” said Borís. “I will do the honors of the camp to you. You will see everything best from where Count Bennigsen will be. I am in attendance on him, you know; I’ll mention it to him. But if you want to ride round the position, come along with us. We are just going to the left flank. Then when we get back, do spend the night with me and we’ll arrange a game of cards. Of course you know Dmítri Sergéevich? Those are his quarters,” and he pointed to the third house in the village of Górkí.

“But I should like to see the right flank. They say it’s very strong,” said Pierre. “I should like to start from the Moskvá River and ride round the whole position.”

“Well, you can do that later, but the chief thing is the left flank.”

“Yes, yes. But where is Prince Bolkónski’s regiment? Can you point it out to me?”

“Prince Andrew’s? We shall pass it and I’ll take you to him.”

“What about the left flank?” asked Pierre

“To tell you the truth, between ourselves, God only knows what state our left flank is in,” said Borís confidentially lowering his voice. “It is not at all what Count Bennigsen intended. He meant to fortify that knoll quite differently, but...” Borís shrugged his shoulders, “his Serene Highness would not have it, or someone persuaded him. You see...” but Borís did not finish, for at that moment Kaysárov, Kutúzov’s adjutant, came up to Pierre. “Ah, Kaysárov!” said Borís, addressing him with an unembarrassed smile, “I was just trying to explain our position to

the count. It is amazing how his Serene Highness could so foresee the intentions of the French!”

“You mean the left flank?” asked Kaysárov.

“Yes, exactly; the left flank is now extremely strong.”

Though Kutúzov had dismissed all unnecessary men from the staff, Borís had contrived to remain at headquarters after the changes. He had established himself with Count Bennigsen, who, like all on whom Borís had been in attendance, considered young Prince Drubetskóy an invaluable man.

In the higher command there were two sharply defined parties: Kutúzov’s party and that of Bennigsen, the chief of staff. Borís belonged to the latter and no one else, while showing servile respect to Kutúzov, could so create an impression that the old fellow was not much good and that Bennigsen managed everything. Now the decisive moment of battle had come when Kutúzov would be destroyed and the power pass to Bennigsen, or even if Kutúzov won the battle it would be felt that everything was done by Bennigsen. In any case many great rewards would have to be given for tomorrow’s action, and new men would come to the front. So Borís was full of nervous vivacity all day.

After Kaysárov, others whom Pierre knew came up to him, and he had not time to reply to all the questions about Moscow that were showered upon him, or to listen to all that was told him. The faces all expressed animation and apprehension, but it seemed to Pierre that the cause of the excitement shown in some of these faces lay chiefly in questions of personal success; his mind, however, was occupied by the different expression he saw on other faces—an expression that spoke not of personal matters but of the universal questions of life and death. Kutúzov noticed Pierre’s figure and the group gathered round him.

“Call him to me,” said Kutúzov.

An adjutant told Pierre of his Serene Highness’ wish, and Pierre went toward Kutúzov’s bench. But a militiaman got there before him. It was Dólokhov.

“How did that fellow get here?” asked Pierre.

“He’s a creature that wriggles in anywhere!” was the answer. “He has been degraded, you know. Now he wants to bob up again. He’s been proposing some scheme or other and has crawled into the enemy’s picket line at night.... He’s a brave fellow.”

Pierre took off his hat and bowed respectfully to Kutúzov.

“I concluded that if I reported to your Serene Highness you might send me away or say that you knew what I was reporting, but then I shouldn’t lose anything...” Dólokhov was saying.

“Yes, yes.”

“But if I were right, I should be rendering a service to my Fatherland for which I am ready to die.”

“Yes, yes.”

“And should your Serene Highness require a man who will not spare his skin, please think of me.... Perhaps I may prove useful to your Serene Highness.”

“Yes... Yes...” Kutúzov repeated, his laughing eye narrowing more and more as he looked at Pierre.

Just then Borís, with his courtierlike adroitness, stepped up to Pierre’s side near Kutúzov and in a most natural manner, without raising his voice, said to Pierre, as though continuing an interrupted conversation:

“The militia have put on clean white shirts to be ready to die. What heroism, Count!”

Borís evidently said this to Pierre in order to be overheard by his Serene Highness. He knew Kutúzov’s attention would be caught by those words, and so it was.

“What are you saying about the militia?” he asked Borís.

“Preparing for tomorrow, your Serene Highness—for death—they have put on clean shirts.”

“Ah... a wonderful, a matchless people!” said Kutúzov; and he closed his eyes and swayed his head. “A matchless people!” he repeated with a sigh.

“So you want to smell gunpowder?” he said to Pierre. “Yes, it’s a pleasant smell. I have the honor to be one of your wife’s adorers. Is she well? My quarters are at your service.”

And as often happens with old people, Kutúzov began looking about absent-mindedly as if forgetting all he wanted to say or do.

Then, evidently remembering what he wanted, he beckoned to Andrew Kaysárov, his adjutant’s brother.

“Those verses... those verses of Márin’s... how do they go, eh? Those he wrote about Gerákov: ‘Lectures for the corps inditing’... Recite them, recite them!” said he, evidently preparing to laugh.

Kaysárov recited.... Kutúzov smilingly nodded his head to the rhythm of the verses.

When Pierre had left Kutúzov, Dólokhov came up to him and took his hand.

“I am very glad to meet you here, Count,” he said aloud, regardless of the presence of strangers and in a particularly resolute and solemn

tone. "On the eve of a day when God alone knows who of us is fated to survive, I am glad of this opportunity to tell you that I regret the misunderstandings that occurred between us and should wish you not to have any ill feeling for me. I beg you to forgive me."

Pierre looked at Dólokhov with a smile, not knowing what to say to him. With tears in his eyes Dólokhov embraced Pierre and kissed him.

Borís said a few words to his general, and Count Bennigsen turned to Pierre and proposed that he should ride with him along the line.

"It will interest you," said he.

"Yes, very much," replied Pierre.

Half an hour later Kutúzov left for Tatárinova, and Bennigsen and his suite, with Pierre among them, set out on their ride along the line.